

Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007

S. /H.R.

KEY FACTS

- Protects nearly 43,000 acres of the Jefferson National Forest in southwestern Virginia as wilderness or wilderness study areas and nearly 12,000 acres as scenic areas.
- Each of the new Wilderness and National Scenic Area designations has been endorsed by either the U.S. Forest Service and/or the Board of Supervisors of the County in which the area is located. The proposed new Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas are:
 1. ***Stone Mountain (Cave Springs)*** – The Stone Mountain proposed Wilderness Area is a 3,270-acre tract of land adjacent to the North Fork of the Powell River in Lee County. The property is considered to be one of the least disturbed forests in all of Southwest Virginia and is home to rich populations of two rare salamanders. The Stone Mountain and Payne Branch trails are included as part of the proposed Wilderness Area and provide convenient access for hikers and hunters wishing to visit the Wilderness Area. The trails are also connected to an adjacent campground at Cave Springs.
 2. ***Raccoon Branch*** – The Raccoon Branch proposed Wilderness Area is located in Smyth County in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. The property contains 4,223 acres of extremely rugged country characterized by high ridges and low streams. Eight major trails provide excellent access for hunters, fishermen, hikers and horseback riders and two nearby campgrounds serve as convenient trailheads. In addition, 4.5 miles of the Appalachian Trail also traverses the proposed Wilderness Area.
 3. ***Brush Mountain*** – The Brush Mountain proposed Wilderness Area is located in Montgomery County, near the Town of Blacksburg and Virginia Tech. The area is 4,794 acres in size and extends approximately 8 miles along the northwest slope of Brush Mountain. The property is characterized largely by its remoteness, despite its proximity to the suburbs of Blacksburg, providing hunters and hikers with a feeling of true wilderness solitude.
 4. ***Brush Mountain East*** – The Brush Mountain East proposed Wilderness Area is adjacent to the Brush Mountain proposed Wilderness Area and is located in Craig County. This tract is 3,769 acres in size and shares many of the characteristics of its neighboring proposed Wilderness Area. Brush Mountain East also possesses excellent views along Craig Creek and Brush Mountain's

steep mountain face and is near the Audie Murphy Monument lookout near the top of the ridge.

5. ***Garden Mountain*** – The Garden Mountain proposed Wilderness Area is located in Bland County. The tract is 3,291 acres and extends along the rugged south face of Garden Mountain. Lick Creek lies at the foot of this steep ridgeline. There are two developed trails associated with the proposal. The Appalachian Trail parallels the northern boundary along the summit of Garden Mountain, while the Lick Creek Trail provides access to the valley bottom.
 6. ***Hunting Camp Creek*** – Hunting Camp Creek proposed Wilderness Area (8,470 acres) in Bland County is adjacent to the proposed Garden Mountain Wilderness. The valleys of Hunting Camp Creek and Little Wolf Creek provide excellent opportunities for solitude and a true wilderness experience. The valleys of both creeks show evidence of the past workings of beaver including old dams and long chains of marshy areas. The Appalachian Trail traverses this wild, scenic area.
 7. ***Lynn Camp Creek*** - The Lynn Camp Creek proposed Wilderness Study Area (3,226 acres) is located in Bland County. Lynn Camp includes the northern slope of Brushy Mountain. This steep ridge descends to the tranquil Lynn Camp Creek. North of Lynn Camp Creek lies the Lynn Camp Mountain. Two trails traverse this gem. The Appalachian Trail moves from south to north, while the Lynn Camp Trail follows the course of Lynn Camp Creek from east to west.
- Creates two new National Scenic Areas to protect almost 12,000 acres of Virginia national forests. The proposed National Scenic Areas designated in the legislation are:
 1. ***Bear Creek*** – The Bear Creek proposed National Scenic Area is located in Smyth County and includes 5,128 acres. The area extends from the crest of Walker Mountain southward to the crest of Brushy Mountain and includes the enclosed valley between the two mountains. An extensive network of trails is included in the proposed area, including more than four miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.
 2. ***Seng Mountain*** – The Seng Mountain proposed National Scenic Area is 6,455 acres in size and is located in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area in Smyth County. Rowland Creek Falls, a 45-foot cascading waterfall, is a major scenic attraction in the area. The area also includes a network of recreational trails, and convenient access is provided to visitors via the Hurricane Campground and Skulls Gap Picnic Area.

- Designates as additions to existing wilderness areas – Mountain Lake Wilderness (5,476 acres), Lewis Fork Wilderness (308 acres), Little Wilson Creek Wilderness (1,845 acres), Shawvers Run Wilderness (2,249 acres), Peters Mountain Wilderness (1,203 acres) and Kimberling Creek Wilderness and Potential Wilderness (612 acres).
- The proposed Lynn Camp Creek Wilderness Study Area will be studied by the Forest Service for possible designation by Congress as wilderness. Until Congress acts, this area will be managed as wilderness.
- Recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, picnicking, backpacking, bird watching, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, spelunking, rock-climbing and many other outdoor activities would be continued and encouraged in the new Wilderness Areas.
- Wilderness designation protects habitat for bear, song birds and wild turkey and includes many stands of old growth.
- Located near the growing population centers of southwestern Virginia, the wilderness areas provide opportunities for solitude, wilderness recreation and spiritual renewal in these forests that are our heritage from the past.
- Directs the Forest Service to establish a continuous non-motorized trail on the south side of the Raccoon Branch area between County Route 650 and Forest Development Road 4018 for mountain bike, equestrian and hiking use. The bill also directs the Forest Service to develop appropriate trail plans for the wilderness and national scenic areas.